Tony Stephens Education Support

http://tonystephens.org.uk

tonystephens856@gmail.com

07977804899

**257 Academy and School News and Resources Update, Feb 24-March 1 2024**

*Copyright, Tony Stephens*

***Website references are given where needed in all cases***

**http://tonystephens.org.uk**

**Attendance**

* **The DfE has issued new regulations for schools in next stage of attendance drive for August 2024 onwards**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-regulations-for-schools-in-next-stage-of-attendance-drive>
* Every state school in England will now **share their daily attendance registers** across the education sector - including with the department for education, councils, and trusts. Schools, trusts and councils will be able to access this data via an interactive secure data dashboard maintained by the DfE
* **Parent fines** for unauthorised absences will also be brought under a national framework to help tackle inconsistencies in their use. From September, schools will have to consider a fine if a pupil misses 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. But councils “retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met Alongside this, costs for fines will go up from £60 to £80 if paid within 21 days and from £120 to £160 if paid in 28 days which will ensure all parents are aware of when they might face a fine to ensure all councils are issuing fines appropriately. The threshold can be met with “any combination of unauthorised absence”. For example, four sessions in term time plus six instances of arriving late. The period of 10 weeks can also span “different terms or school years”. Schools decide whether to issue fines, but councils administer them. From the autumn, only two fines can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year rolling period. Any second notice will automatically be charged at £160. New “notices to improve” will also be the “final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued”.

**ASCL** said it was “important to understand that these fines predominately relate to pupils who are taken out of school for term-time holidays”. However, it said there was a “wider issue about absence relating to the growing number of children who suffer from anxiety and other mental health issues, families who are struggling to cope, and disengagement with education, which schools are endeavouring to address”. <https://www.ascl.org.uk/News/Our-news-and-press-releases/ASCL-comment-on-increase-in-school-absence-fines-t>

* Rob Tarn, CEO of Northern Education is the **new national attendance ambassador**. Rob will work with schools and school leaders to champion attendance, share effective practice, and support the ongoing development of the attendance hubs programme nationally. He has already said that the changes would not stop rule-breaking parents from taking their children on term-time holidays; increasing fines for parents whose children skip school will do nothing to cut unauthorised absence. “For me, it’s about how we convince parents that the most important thing they can do is send their child to school every day.”
* There are already 32 **Attendance hubs** across the country, which share best practice to schools supporting more than one million pupils, plus piloting attendance mentors, who work directly with pupils to tackle their barriers to attendance alongside a national awareness campaign aimed at helping parents.
* **Key guidance setting out how schools and local authorities must take a ‘support-first’ approach to help pupils and their families to tackle barriers to attendance will be made statutory from August 2024**
* The DfE has updated “**Working together to improve school attendance”. Guidance for schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities on maintaining high levels of school attendance, including roles and responsibilities from August 2014** See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Also included are these documents:

**Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance from 19 August 2024**, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65df04aff1cab30011fc4842/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance__applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf>

**Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance Updated 29 February 2024,** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance/toolkit-for-schools-communicating-with-families-to-support-attendance>

**Annex A: example attendance letters and emails to parents and carers**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

**Guidance for parents on school attendance - Office of the Children's Commissioner**, <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/back-into-school/resources-for-families/>

All these documents set expectations including regular meetings between schools and local authorities to agree plans for the most at-risk absent children. They particularly emphasise the importance of **support for pupils with SEND and mental ill health** who often need more individual consideration due to wider barriers. They ask schools, local authorities and wider services to work together to support these pupils, encouraging early intervention and close working with families to address their individual needs.

**Some other key points**:

* Pupils should not be given approval to take time off school for protests, the new statutory attendance guidance that comes into force from August sets out.
* The new attendance guidance is also more explicit on which scenarios schools should grant leave of absences. This includes taking part in a “regulated performance or employment abroad”, attending an interview or for study leave. There is still a category for “exceptional circumstances”, with applications to be considered individually.
* Schools will have to give councils the name and address of sick pupils who they believe will miss 15 consecutive or cumulative days. Schools will also be “expected to inform a pupil’s social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences from school”.
* Schools cannot “retrospectively” delete a pupil’s name from the admission register or attendance register. Where pupils have been located but not returned to class, a “joint decision” is needed between schools and LAs, and they can only be removed from a register if there are “no reasonable grounds” to believe the child will return, even with support or enforcement.
* A new code K will apply to education provision arranged by a council, rather than the school. And there are greater restrictions on using code B for off-site education arranged by schools, requiring the provision to be “of an educational nature”, with their attendance approved by the school. Schools must record the nature of the education provided and “be satisfied that appropriate measures have been taken to safeguard the pupil”.
* The government has also created additional “C” absence codes. While C will be for “exceptional circumstances”, C1 will be for absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad. C2 will be for pupils on part-time timetables.
* A new code Q will be for pupils “unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements”.
* The current code Y will be split up, as follows…
	+ Y1: Absence due to transport normally provided not being available
	+ Y2: “Widespread disruption to travel”
	+ Y3: For when part of a school is closed
	+ Y4: Unexpected whole school closure (different from code # for planned closures)
	+ Y5: For pupils in the criminal justice system
	+ Y6: Absence due to public health guidance or law
	+ Y7: “Any other unavoidable cause”
* DFE has issued “**Elective home education: autumn term 2023**”. Information on the number and characteristics of children in elective home education (EHE) in England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/elective-home-education-autumn-term-2023> As at census date in autumn 2023, an estimated 92,000 children were in elective home education (EHE). This includes adjustments made for non-response and is based on a figure of 87,700 reported by 95% of local authorities. This is an increase from an estimated 80,900 in the previous autumn term. During the 2022/23 academic year, an estimated 126,100 children were EHE at any point. This includes adjustments made for non-response and is based on a figure of 119,200 reported by 94% of local authorities. This is an increase from an estimated 116,300 in 2021/22. Where a child was EHE more than once during the year, they are only recorded once. Of those in home education on census day last October, 19 per cent were in year 11, 16 per cent in year 10 and 14 per cent in year 9. In comparison, just 3 per cent were in year 1.

The proportion of cases for which mental health was cited as the primary reason has gradually increased from 9 per cent in autumn 2022 to 13 per cent last autumn. General dissatisfaction increased from 6 to 8 per cent. Philosophical reasons remains the main primary reason, cited in 16 per cent of cases.

* The DfE has issued “**Children missing education: autumn term 2023**”. Information on the number and characteristics of children missing education (CME) in England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-missing-education-autumn-term-2023> As at census date in autumn 2023, there were an estimated 33,000 children missing education (CME). This includes adjustments made for non-response and is based on a figure of 30,400 reported by 94% of local authorities. This is an increase from an estimated 24,700 in the previous autumn term. During the 2022/23 academic year, there were an estimated 117,100 CME at any point. This includes adjustments made for non-response and is based on a figure of 95,200 reported by 88% of local authorities. This is an increase from an estimated 94,900 in 2021/22. Where a child was missing education more than once during the year, they are only recorded once.

Six per cent of children missing education have an education, health and care plan for special needs, compared to 4 per cent of pupils nationally. They are also more than twice as likely to have a child protection plan. For those missing education on census day last October, moving out of the country was the primary reason in 11 per cent of cases, and moving out of a local authority area was the main factor in 9 per cent. But for 8 per cent of cases, the child was awaiting the outcome of a school application, and 6 per cent related to “unsuitable” home education.

**Staff pay**

* The DfE has issued “**The Education Secretary’s evidence to the School Teachers’ Review Body (STRB) about the 2024 pay award**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-to-the-strb-2024-pay-award-for-teachers-and-leaders> Teacher pay awards should return to a “more sustainable level” than seen in the last two years, the government has told the School Teachers Review Body. The DfE has also revealed it believes there is only headroom in budgets for the next financial year for schools to raise spending by 1.2 per cent or £600 million. Ministers have previously estimated that each 1 percentage point increase in teacher pay costs about £270 million. In her remit letter to the STRB in December, education secretary Gillian Keegan said the body must consider evidence on the “impact of pay rises on schools’ budgets” when making its recommendations for pay from September 2024. Now the DfE is pointing out teachers’ average pay had risen by over 12 per cent over the past two years. Starting salaries have increased by 17 per cent over the same period. The department also pointed to a doubling to £6,000 of levelling up premium payments to teachers of certain subjects, and said those who had also moved up pay bands in the last two years could have seen rises of up to 32 per cent. It said the rises of 5 per cent for most teachers in 2022 and 6.5 per cent last year were “appropriate” But the “wider economic context has moderated, with inflation more than halving from its peak in late 2022 and wage growth easing from the high levels seen in the summer of 2023”. Inflation is forecast to average 2.1 per cent over the 2024-25 academic year, and an increase in unemployment is “expected to ease the level of vacancies across the private and public sector, supporting recruitment and retention”. “Considering the above, it is the department’s view that the overall reward package for teachers, the recruitment and retention picture, and the more stable economic context support the return of teacher pay awards to a more sustainable level than the previous two historically high pay awards. In analysis of schools’ costs for the current and next financial years, the DfE said it estimated mainstream schools could raise spending by a further 1.2 per cent in 2024-25. That headroom would only allow for a pay rise of around 2 per cent, based on previous DfE estimates of the cost of rises. But the headroom “would be lower were energy costs to rise faster than we have estimated”.

It has also been revealed that £250 million for this year’s grant had to come from the department’s capital budget, most of which is used for school rebuilds and maintenance.

The DfE has also instructed the STRB to give its views on the “**potential benefits, in principle, of targeting remuneration by subject in the future**”. The DfE asked the STRB to focus on “exploring the evidence base for targeted remuneration to inform further thinking on how this could help to alleviate subject specific recruitment and retention challenges and bridge the gap between teacher pay and outside graduate earnings”.

**ASCL** said STRB “must now assert its independence – as it did last year – by recommending a pay award that addresses these issues and ensures that children and young people have the teachers they need. “And the government must ensure schools can afford the pay award necessary for this purpose – beginning with the investment in education that is so clearly needed in next week’s spring budget.”

* **Three unions representing school support staff have called for a 10 per cent pay rise from April**. The unions - Unison, GMB and Unite - say the rise is essential as staff battle the cost-of-living crisis, real-term pay cuts and increasing job stress. They are calling for a wage rise of £3,000 or 10 per cent, whichever is higher, for all council employees, including teaching assistants and catering staff. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/teaching-assistant-pay-unions-call-10-rise-school-support-staff>

**School buildings**

* DfE has issued “Exploratory research testing approaches to **getting pupils’ views** on outdoor space, for Department for Education building in use reviews”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/developing-a-method-for-obtaining-pupil-insight-for-building-in-use-reviews>
* The DfE has issued **Condition Fund outcomes**:
* 2020-2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/condition-improvement-fund-2020-to-2021-outcome>
* 2019-2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/condition-improvement-fund-cif-application-outcomes-2019-to-2020>
* 2018-2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/condition-improvement-fund-2018-to-2019-outcome>
* 2017-2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/condition-improvement-fund-2017-to-2018-outcome>
* 2016-2017 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/condition-improvement-fund-2016-to-2017-outcome>
* 2015-2016 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/condition-improvement-fund-2015-to-2016-outcome>
* “**Outdated” facilities in schools** are having “direct consequences” on teaching and learning, a survey has found. Teachers were particularly concerned about inadequate resources for science and pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), especially in secondary schools. Problems with facilities for art, music and PE were also flagged in the survey by the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA) of around 900 schools. A third of schools surveyed by BESA said current investment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Stem) facilities is harming learning outcomes. Additionally, 71 per cent of schools reported IT and computer provision for Stem is inadequate. The report comes after the National Audit Office found last summer that 700,000 pupils were learning in buildings in need of major rebuilding or refurbishment.
* Nearly 30 per cent of schools reported issues with **heating** their classrooms and described the quality of their heating infrastructure as “poor”.
* Only 20 per cent reported they had adequate or good **air conditioning** facilities.
* Around a fifth said they had poor **catering** facilities.
* More than half of respondents reported they were in need of an **outdoor sheltered area** but did not have one.
* Nearly a third of respondents said a **lack of devices** was a serious issue and limited the ability to use technology for teaching and learning.
* There were more positive findings on **internet c**onnection, with the majority describing school wi-fi as reliable - but there continues to be a divide between rural and urban schools.
* Less than 20 per cent of schools indicated their **SEND facilities** were in a good state of repair. Most schools reported that they want specialist classrooms or therapy rooms for pupils with SEND, but do not have them. A majority of schools responding (80 per cent) said they needed adapted PE facilities for children with SEND, but did not have them. Of those that did have adapted PE facilities, 64 per cent said they were under-resourced.
* Schools also reported problems with **facilities for creative subjects** like art, music and design. Of the respondents, 41 per cent of schools said they had inadequate music facilities, and 40 per cent said they had inadequate art and design facilities. More than half of schools responding for design and technology and PE said a lack of investment in facilities is affecting learning outcomes.

See <https://www.besa.org.uk/news/the-state-of-the-estate/>

**Early years; primary; childcare**

* Jeremy Hunt is being urged by business leaders to fix the **UK’s broken childcare system** to secure a boost to the economy worth £11bn by enabling more parents and carers to work. In the run-up to next week’s budget, industry leaders said the chancellor needed to clarify funding arrangements for childcare providers before the government’s April deadline for providing additional financial help. The intervention came as childcare providers in England warned they will struggle to meet extra demand for funded places, amid chaos surrounding the introduction of the new free hours scheme. See <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/29/budget-2024-hunt-urged-to-boost-uk-economy-by-fixing-broken-childcare-system>
* STA has issued “**Information leaflet for parents about end of key stage assessments for 7 and 11 year olds**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-and-2-national-curriculum-tests-information-for-parents>
* Official figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed **“total fertility”, calculated based on the birthrate across different age groups**, fell to 1.49 children per woman in 2022. That is well below the rate of 2.1 needed to maintain a steady population without significant immigration. In total, there were 605,479 live births in 2022, according to the ONS, down 3.1% from a year earlier, and the lowest number since 2002. Falling birthrates since 2010 have already prompted schools closures in many areas in recent years, including central London. See <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2022refreshedpopulations>
* The DfE has issued:
	+ **National wraparound childcare programme funding**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-wraparound-childcare-programme-funding> Guidance shows the funds were divided up based on “the number of schools with primary aged pupils that either do not offer full wraparound provision or only have a partial” offer.
	+ **Wraparound childcare guidance for schools**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wraparound-childcare-guidance-for-schools> For a useful **summary**, see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/give-parents-termly-window-to-request-childcare-schools-told/v>
	+ **Wraparound childcare: guidance for local authorities**, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wraparound-childcare-guidance-for-local-authorities>
* STA has issued “**2025 reception baseline assessment: IT guidance**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/2024-reception-baseline-assessment-it-guidance>
* STA Has issued a collection of documents ” **Reception baseline assessment: collection page**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/reception-baseline> A move to introduce some on-screen elements to the baseline assessment taken by reception pupils has been delayed for a year. STA had planned to have pupils answer some reception baseline assessment (RBA) questions on a touchscreen device from this September. But it now confirms that the approach would not be adopted until September 2025. The assessment was introduced in 2021, and has now replaced key stage 1 SATs as the baseline against which pupil progress is tracked.
* **Labour’s biggest focus is on childcare and early-years education, and is drawing up an alternative to the current system of free childcare hours**. Labour is considering creating nursery places inside existing primary schools and has tasked David Bell, the former permanent secretary at the DfE, with looking into different options. “We need better alignment between early-years education and the school system overall, so that they’re better joined together,” Phillipson said. “We are, at the moment, already starting to see schools with surplus classrooms. And I think that does present an opportunity for some creative thinking about how we can use that in the future.”
* Half of primary school teachers believe this year’s **Reception pupils were less ready for school than last year’s,** according to a “concerning” poll. Teachers said that more than one-third of children (35 per cent) were not ready to start. And teachers are spending 2.5 hours per day, on average, on supporting pupils who are not school-ready, the report warns, leading pupils to lose around one-third of learning time a day. A quarter of pupils (25 per cent) lacked basic language skills and 37 per cent were unable to dress independently, according to teachers polled. **However, the vast majority of parents (91 per cent) believed their child was ready for school**. And half of parents (50 per cent) said they believed that toilet training their child was not “solely their job”, according to the poll for early years charity Kindred Squared, which interviewed more than 2,000 state-funded primary school staff and parents. The term “school ready” is used in the report to describe children being “developmentally ready to access the learning and development opportunities available to them in Reception”. The report says that factors such as the rising cost of living continue to influence school readiness, with the majority of teachers (82 per cent) anticipating that this will continue to negatively affect school readiness levels in the coming years. See <https://kindredsquared.org.uk/projects/school-readiness-survey/>
* **Lack of support for early years language and communication development is leading to a “literacy crisis**” that could be costing the economy £830m for each school year group, according to new research. The report, led by Pro Bono Economics (PBE) and commissioned by KPMG UK in collaboration with the National Literacy Trust (NLT), also found that there are about 106,000 five-year-old children in England each year who are not currently meeting the expected standard for literacy but could with adequate support. Two-fifths of the 106,000 children who could have been meeting expected literacy standards with the right support live in deprived areas. See <https://www.probonoeconomics.com/early-literacy-matters>

The publication of the report coincides with the launch of an NLT campaign, **Early Words Matter**, which will offer support to 250,000 children in areas worst-hit by the cost of living crisis and call on the government and businesses to invest in high-quality early childhood education. See <https://literacytrust.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/early-words-matter/>

* Ofsted has issued “**Early years and childcare: Ofsted's enforcement policy**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-and-childcare-ofsteds-enforcement-policy>

**School funding and costs**

* DfE has issued” Information to help schools, academies and **others understand costs for schools** in England”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-costs-technical-note>
* ESFA has issued “**Mainstream schools additional grant 2023 to 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mainstream-schools-additional-grant-2023-to-2024>
* ESFA has issued “**Teachers' pay additional grant for 2023 to 2024**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-pay-additional-grant-2023-to-2024>
* ESFA has issued “Guidance, allocations and conditions of grant for **pre-16 schools fundin**g”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authorities-pre-16-schools-funding>
* **Almost three-quarters of schools in England are facing real-terms cuts since 2010** due to government funding decisions, analysis from a coalition of education unions has shown. New data released from School Cuts suggests before the spring budget next month that £12.2bn of investment is needed to reverse the cuts 70% of English state-funded schools have faced in the last 14 years under the Conservatives. That would include funding to repair crumbling school buildings and tackle the crisis in special educational needs funding, the unions said. The analysis also showed that real-terms cuts had affected 66% of maintained primary schools and 88% of secondary schools. See <https://schoolcuts.org.uk/> **The website gives details on which individual schools are part of the 70%**
* Cuts to children’s services at “bankrupt**” Birmingham council** will leave already stretched schools “plugging the gaps”, teachers have warned. Birmingham has proposed £300 million of cuts after issuing a section 114 notice last year, meaning it is unable to set a balanced budget. Council documents this week revealed £63 million of savings over two years from its children’s and families budget. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-face-struggle-to-plug-the-gaps-in-bankrupt-birmingham/>
* The DfE has issued “**Free school travel: funding allocations**”. Funding for local authorities to spend on home-to-school travel for children from low-income families from 2021 to 2025. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extended-rights-to-free-school-travel--2>
* ESFA has updated “**16 to 19 funding allocations supporting documents for 2024 to 2025**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-funding-allocations-supporting-documents-for-2024-to-2025>
* **Schools would need £3.2 billion in** **extra funding** to address the loss of purchasing power in budgets since 2010, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has said. It has also found that funding for schools in England would need to rise by £700 million above existing plans for 2024-25 to allow them to meet expected cost rises. The IFS has calculated that, on current projections, the purchasing power of school budgets will be 5 per cent below 2010 levels in 2024. See <https://ifs.org.uk/articles/latest-picture-school-funding-and-costs-england>

**The school year**

* **England should ditch its school calendar “stuck in place since Victorian times” and replace it with shorter summer holidays and longer half-term breaks** to improve the lives of pupils and teachers, according to a new report. The report on tackling post-pandemic education inequalities, part of a project funded by the Nuffield Foundation to be published next month, is to recommend an overhaul of the school calendar that could see summer holidays in state schools reduced from six weeks to four, while half-term breaks in autumn and winter could each be extended from one week to two. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/feb/26/school-summer-holidays-half-term-england-calendar-nuffield-foundation-report> For a linked article, “**Staff absences fell 50% after schools introduced longer half-term break**. Suffolk-based schools trust also found that pupil absences for illness fell 25% after extending autumn holiday”, see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/feb/26/staff-absences-fell-50-after-schools-introduced-longer-half-term-break>

The **NASUWT** says there is no credible evidence that shorter summer break will improve standards. See <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/article-listing/no-evidence-shorter-break-will-improve-standards.html>

**ITT; teacher recruitment; ECTs**

* The DfE has updated “The criteria that organisations must meet to provide **international qualified teacher status** (iQTS) for applicants training outside the UK”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-qualified-teacher-status-criteria-for-providers>
* **Teacher recruitment this year is being propped up by a huge rise in applications from outside of the United Kingdom**, new analysis suggests. Sam Freedman, a former advisor to the DfE, said it shows the teaching profession is “shifting towards becoming increasingly dependent on immigration, just as has happened with healthcare. And, just as with healthcare, it is a function of pay being held down.” Analysis shows recruitment figures this year are similar to last year, which was one of the worst on record with just half of the required secondary trainees recruited. Overall, the proportion of primary recruits was 11 per cent lower compared to the same time last year, while secondary was 13 per cent up. But Jack Worth, education economist at the National Foundation for Educational Research, said the growth has been “dominated by international recruitment” amid “limited growth in interest in teaching from anywhere else (especially domestically). See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/international-applicants-prop-up-flagging-teacher-recruitment/>

**Education applications seem to go against the general trend**. Universities UK (UUK), which represents mainstream universities and colleges, said the government’s new curbs, coupled with steep visa fee increases and threats to cut back on graduate work entitlements, are having a negative impact on the UK as a study destination. Data from more than 60 UK universities shows that the number of study visas issued has fallen by 33% this year compared with the same time last year. A separate survey of 70 universities by UUK found that enrolments in postgraduate taught courses were down by more than 40% since January’s immigration changes. See <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/feb/29/student-immigration-restrictions-will-damage-uk-economy-universities-say>

* The DfE has issued “Research reports presenting findings from the national roll-out of the **early career framework (ECF) induction programmes**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-career-framework-induction-evaluation>
* ESFA has issued “**Financial handbook for independent training providers**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/financial-handbook-for-independent-training-providers>
* The DfE has issued “**International relocation payments: guidance for ITT providers**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-relocation-payments>

**SEND**

* Ministers have appointed the first **SEND “improvement adviser**” at a council. John Coughlan has been appointed as “strategic SEND improvement adviser” to report back to ministers on the progress of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council
* Ofsted has issued “**Area SEND inspections**: information about ongoing inspections”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspections-information-for-families>
* DfE has issued “**Independent schools for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities**, which have been approved under section 41 of the Children and Families Act”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-special-schools-and-colleges>
* The DfE has issued guidance to help local authorities in England to understand their statutory functions in relation **to education, health and care plans when children and young people move out of or into their area**. This includes moving into or outside of England. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ehc-plans-when-a-child-or-young-person-moves>

**EAL**

* **Training teachers on using more subject-specific language boosts science progress for pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL)**, research has found. Year 10 EAL pupils made around a month’s additional progress in GCSE sciences if taught by teachers who received continuing professional development on how to better use grammar, core vocabulary and spoken language to support them, a trial evaluated by the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) found. The study focused on GCSE science, but around a month’s additional progress was also found for GCSE English language as a result of the training. However, no additional progress was detected for GCSE history. Across three workshops, participating teachers were trained on developing their understanding of characteristics of academic language in their subject and how EAL pupils need these, and how to embed this in their lessons. Of teachers who received the training, nearly three quarters (73 per cent) reported they were either strongly or somewhat confident in the programme’s ability to help EAL pupil’s learning. For the 2022-23 academic year, government data shows EAL pupils now make up around one-fifth of the pupil population across primary and secondary schools in England. See <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/professional-development-programme-for-teachers-could-boost-eal-pupils-gcse-scores>

**Behaviour and suspensions**

* An analysis of attendance registers, carried out by FFT Education Datalab, finds that **suspensions and exclusions have continued to rise this academic year** - and that there was a notable increase in the autumn of 2023 compared with the same period in 2022. Its analysis suggests that the rate of suspension and exclusion for Year 9 students increased to 11.7 per cent last term, up from 8.3 per cent last year - a 40 per cent increase in the number of suspensions and exclusions. For Year 7 students, there was a smaller absolute increase - from a lower base - of 1.8 percentage points but this was a larger relative increase of 55 per cent increase in suspensions and exclusions. See <https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2024/02/the-continuing-rise-in-suspensions-and-exclusions/#post/0>
* DfE has issued guidance on **Behaviour hubs**. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/behaviour-hubs>

**Health, safety and welfare of children and young people**

* The DfE has updated “Statutory guidance, “**Working together to safeguard children**” Statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2> It shows what is new in the Update
* **Young people are more likely to be out of work because of ill health than people in their early 40s**, a report calling for action on Britain’s mental wellbeing crisis has found. People in their early 20s with mental health problems may have not had access to a steady education and can end up out of work or in low-paid jobs, the Resolution Foundation research revealed. According to official data, 34% of people aged 18 to 24 reported symptoms of mental disorder, such as depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder in 2021-22. It is a significant increase on the 2000 figure of 24%, with young women one-and-a-half times more likely to be negatively affected. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/feb/25/people-in-20s-more-likely-out-of-work-because-of-ill-health-than-those-in-early-40s>
* Analysis by the House of Commons Library found a 400 per cent rise in **mentions of ‘sexism’, ‘misogyny’, ‘sexual harassment’, ‘sexual abuse’ and ‘safeguarding incident’ in Ofsted reports** between 2019 and 2022. It found the number of reports containing the terms ‘sexism’, ‘misogyny’, ‘sexual harassment’, ‘sexual abuse’ and ‘safeguarding incident’ rose from 39, or 0.9 per cent of reports in 2019 to 199, or 5.4 per cent of reports in 2022. The most used of the phrases in 2022 was ‘sexual harassment’ (106 reports), followed by ‘safeguarding incident (87 reports) and ‘sexual abuse’ (28 reports). However, Ofsted beefed up sections of its handbook for inspectors on dealing with harmful sexual behaviour in 2021, after admitting it did not know if its own inspections were “sufficiently assessing” the extent of sexual harassment and violence.

Labour says its school improvement teams will be tasked **with training older schoolboys to coach younger peers to “recognise and stop” misogyny and “end the scourge of sexual harassment by young men influenced by online misogyny**”. No further details have been provided. Labour also said it would **embed “digital literacy in the curriculum** so that young people are given the critical tools to deal with online hate and misinformation”. Labour has not said how its approach will differ to the status quo. It also reasserted its plans to, provide access to **mental health counsellors in every school**, and give **Ofsted the power to carry out new annual safeguarding checks**. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/mentors-stop-misogyny-schools-under-labour-plan>

* There is evidence of the increasingly dysfunctional rationing of treatment for **eating disorders** which are afflicting ever-increasing numbers of people. About 75% of those affected are female. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of patients treated in English hospitals for an eating disorder went up by 84%, from about 13,000 to 24,000. Now, 1.25 million people in the UK are reckoned to have one of the relevant conditions. And the rate of increase among young people seems flatly terrifying: in 2023, NHS figures suggested that the proportion of people aged 17-19 with an eating disorder stood at 12%, up from 0.8% only six years before. See <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/feb/25/illness-worsens-scandal-eating-disorder-treatment-england>

The number of people in the UK who have a previously little-known eating disorder, in which those afflicted avoid many foods, has risen sevenfold in five years, figures show. The eating disorders charity Beat received 295 calls about **avoidant restrictive food intake disorder (Arfid)** in 2018 – comprising 2% of its 20,535 inquiries that year. However, it received 2,054 calls last year, which accounted for one in 10 of its 20,535 requests for help. Many were from children and young people or their parents. Unlike other eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia, Arfid isn’t driven by feelings around [someone’s] weight or shape”. “Instead, it might be due to having sensory issues around the texture or taste of certain foods, fear about eating due to distressing experiences with food, for example choking, or lack of interest in eating.” See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/feb/26/uk-eating-disorder-arfid-avoidant-restrictive-food-intake-disorder-nhs>

**NTP**

* A group of cross-party MPs, including the chair of the Commons Education Select Committee, have written to the chancellor adding their voices to calls **to extend tutoring money**. The MPs are asking the chancellor to use the spring Budget on 6 March to extend the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) and the 16-19 Tuition Fund, which are both slated to end this academic year. The group is the latest to write to the chancellor calling for the extension of NTP funding after tutoring organisations convened a letter signed by more than 500 teachers and leaders. In response to previous calls for tutoring cash to be extended, the DFE has said it will continue to support tutoring through **pupil premium funding**., but PP funding is presently fully used. Previous reviews of the NTP have found that most school leaders say they would be unlikely to afford to carry on tutoring once the government subsidy is removed. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/tutoring-funding-cut-highly-detrimental-budget-jeremy-hunt>

**School management**

* The DfE has updated its guidance on **school uniform policy**. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-uniform/school-uniforms>
* DfE has issued “**Get help taking on an apprentice**”. Small employers who have not taken on an apprentice in the last 2 years can access advice and support from the apprenticeship brokerage service. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-taking-on-an-apprentice>
* For the latest **ESFA Update**, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-28-february-2024>
* DfE has issued “**Find a teaching school hub”.** See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-school-hubs> and “**List of teaching school hubs from September 2024**”, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-teaching-school-hubs/list-of-teaching-school-hubs-from-september-2024>

**Staff welfare**

* OCR have said **“It must be acknowledged that AI does place a significant burden on teachers,** who are already under an enormous amount of pressure,” he said. “It means that coursework requires extra time and scrutiny. “If teachers are going to spot undeclared use of AI, they need a close relationship with each of their students and a sound knowledge of each of their true capabilities”. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/assessment-teachers-face-significant-burden-ai>
* DfE has issued “The findings of the second wave of **the working lives of teachers and leaders survey**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-2>
* School leaders and teachers now work even more hours than last year despite a push by ministers to reduce workload. This shows full-time leaders’ average working week in 2023 was 58.2 hours – over 11 hours a day – up from 57.5 in 2022. The survey polled more than 10,000 workers, and found full-time teachers’ average hours were 52.4 per week, up from 51.9 in 2022.
* Teachers and leaders’ job satisfaction has also plummeted. Only 46 per cent were satisfied “most of the time”, compared to 58 per cent last year. Nineteen percent rarely had satisfaction. Nine in 10 teachers and leaders did not feel valued by policymakers, with 71 per cent disagreeing that the school inspection regime provided a “fair assessment” of school performance. But 65 per cent did feel valued by their school. Only 20 per cent of teachers and leaders were satisfied with their salary compared to 26 per cent last year. Just 7 per cent were happy with the changes to teachers’ pay.
* Teachers reported more negative views on pupil behaviour – with 49 per cent of teachers rating it as good or above, down from 58 per cent last year.
* When asked to rate their anxiety the previous day, 44 per cent of teachers and leaders answered “high”. The figure is in line with the one reported in 2022 (43 per cent). The study shows a higher proportion of teachers and leaders reported more negative impacts of their job on personal life and wellbeing. Eighty-eight per cent said they experienced stress at work, up 2 per centage points on the previous year. The proportion of those who found their job did not leave them with enough time for their personal lives rose from 65 per cent to 73 per cent. Meanwhile almost two thirds (63 per cent) of respondents said their roles have negatively affected their mental health. The figure stood at 56 per cent the year before. More than one in five reported that their managers did not consider their work-life balance or support their wellbeing.
* More than a third of those surveyed (36 per cent) indicated they were considering leaving the state school sector in the next 12 months. This represents an increase from 25 per cent in 2022. High workload was the common reason behind their desire to leave teaching, with 94 per cent saying it was an important factor. More than 80 per cent also cited stress and “teachers’ views not being valued by policymakers like the government”. A further 63 per cent answered “dissatisfaction with pay”.
* More than 440 participants in the first working lives survey in 2022 had left the sector. The most common reasons for moving jobs were high workload (80 per cent) and stress or wellbeing (74 per cent). Half of those still in employment had moved into jobs offering a lower salary. When asked how likely they were to return to the sector, two-thirds leavers indicated they were unlikely to.

**Academies and Trusts**

* **The body representing England’s academy trusts has added its voice to calls for an independent schools regulator**. In a report published this morning, the Confederation of School Trusts said its vision would “ensure independence, impartiality and transparency” of decisions, with it having the same legal standing as Ofqual, the exams regulator. CST is also urging the government to give regulation and commissioning responsibilities to such a body. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Schools-accountability-and-regulatory-system-CST.pdf>
* For an article**, “Training the next generation of academy CEOs”,** see <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/top-of-the-trusts-training-the-next-generation-of-academy-ceos/>
* There are more than 1,300 multi-academy trusts in England, but they are not evenly spread across the country. TES has produced an **interactive map which shows where each MAT is headquartered, along with the number of schools that it runs.** There is also a **MAT Tracker.** See<https://www.tes.com/magazine/leadership/data/mat-tracker-multi-academy-trusts-map>
* **Almost nine in 10 large multi-academy trusts (MATs) expect to grow over the next two years**. And nearly a third of **single-academy trusts** (SATs) plan to grow over the same time period to 2025, suggesting that the sharp decline of one-school trusts will continue. The bigger a MAT is, the more likely it is to plan to grow. However, it appears that MAT growth is slowing overall, with 73 per cent of trusts expecting to grow over the next two years, down from 92 per cent the previous year. The total number of academy schools only grew by 27 per cent over the last five years, compared with 100 per cent for the five years to 2019, adding that we are seeing a “move to consolidation, with many trusts slowing their growth while they address financial challenges” See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/large-multi-academy-trusts-expected-grow-by-2025>
* The DfE has issued “**Apply for the trust capacity fund**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-trust-capacity-fund>
* The DfE has issued “**Apply for the trust establishment and growth fund**”. See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-trust-establishment-and-growth-teg-funding>
* For an article, “**What is the outlook for single-academy trusts**?”, see <https://www.tes.com/magazine/leadership/data/future-single-academy-trusts-england>

**Education news for schools**

* **Women's History Month** is celebrated every March as an annual commemoration of the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. Friday 8 March 2024 is International Women’s Day with the theme of #InspireInclusion, which aims to get the world talking about how we can collectively forge women's equality. For details of how to get involved, see <https://www.naht.org.uk/News/Latest-comments/News/ArtMID/556/ArticleID/1971/Womens-History-Month-2024>
* Schools and colleges across England can **sign up for one of three new trials led by EEF,** that will investigate the impact of high potential programmes on children and young people’s outcomes:
	+ Mastering Maths (Post-16 settings)
	+ Primary Sciences Quality Mark (Primary schools)
	+ Mathematical Reasoning (Primary schools)

See <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects-recruiting?token=YnAheJzbUglZlpZe_UYVeqY7mSkrLh2W&mc_cid=0ab904d3b8&mc_eid=af2bafba5e>

* For the latest **STEM Learning Update**, see <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects-recruiting?token=YnAheJzbUglZlpZe_UYVeqY7mSkrLh2W&mc_cid=0ab904d3b8&mc_eid=af2bafba5e>
* Police investigating a **cyber attack at exam board AQA** during last summer’s exams said there were “no further positive lines of enquiry” to pursue.
* The DfE has updated its description of the **national professional qualifications** (NPQs) available to teachers and school leaders for providers to use when designing their courses. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-professional-qualifications-frameworks-from-september-2021>
* **Rory Gribbell**, who has held jobs in the DfE and Downing Street, has been made Ofsted’s director of strategy and engagement
* Education secretary Gillian Keegan has reflected on the **positive role schools have played in welcoming children fleeing the war in Ukraine** since Russia’s invasion in 2022. See <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/russia-invasion-ukraine-two-years-schools-vital-work-keegan>
* Councils are warning over a “possible subscription trap” by **The Big Classroom** after teachers got stung by bills of nearly £500 and legal threats having signed up for a free trial. Headteachers have complained of unwittingly entering an annual subscription contract with the firm, which calls itself a social network for schools, costing £480 after applying for a free pilot. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/schools-warned-over-big-classroom-possible-subscription-trap/>
* **Supply teachers** are exploring “Post Office-style” group litigation to take on umbrella companies over unlawful deductions from their salaries and missing holiday pay. The National Supply Teachers Network (NSTN) is in talks with legal firm Contractors for Justice (C4J) with a view to taking supply agencies to the High Court. See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/supply-teachers-plan-post-office-style-legal-action-to-take-down-umbrella-companies/>
* **Children starting secondary school in England and Wales in September will be offered places this week**. Children starting Year 7 in England and Wales in September find out about school places on Friday 1 March. If parents missed the deadline to apply for a place, in England their applications will not be considered until after the first round of offers are made.
* Ofsted will carry out a **thematic review of careers guidance** for young people in schools and further education and skills providers, following terms of reference shown at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsteds-thematic-review-of-careers-guidance-terms-of-reference>

**Post 16**

* T**he new “elite” sixth forms run by leading academy trust Star and Eton College** have been given government approval to open three selective sixth forms in Dudley, Middlesbrough, and Oldham to help get more bright pupils into top universities. Alongside the schools, they will open education research centres (centres for innovation and learning research, CIRLs) which will work to “identify talented young students in years 10 and 11 – and even earlier – and to work with their schools on an intervention programme to encourage them to stay in structured post-16 environments after GCSE”. “Such environments will include our college but will not be limited to that; we want to also act as a clearing house for pathways to local degree apprenticeship opportunities and other post 16 and post 18 pathways, working with local colleges, university outreach partnerships, and all others in this space”. Outreach work through the CIRLs will also provide a “clear information and guidance offer to better inform these cohorts about what their options are”. “Alongside this, we will deliver a programme in 11-16 education not just of academic support, but of character education, leadership, and aspirations – such that talented students recognise the options open to them, and are less likely to disengage” See <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/elite-star-and-eton-sixth-forms-reveal-clearing-house-careers-role/>
* The vice-chancellor of Cambridge University has said she has been concerned that **admissions were "skewed" towards London and south-east England**. Prof Deborah Prentice said in 2022 nearly half of Cambridge's undergraduates came from "those areas". She said she wanted the university to "serve the UK as a whole". See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-68386836>
* **Ministers have dramatically stalled plans to double the number of doctors being trained in England by 2031**. In June last year, ministers backed a long-term plan to expand the NHS workforce and pledged to “double medical school places by 2031 from 7,500 today to 15,000. But in a leaked letter the DfE says it will fund only 350 additional places for trainee doctors in 2025-26. This is less than a quarter of the annual number widely anticipated. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/feb/25/government-u-turn-on-plans-to-double-number-of-medical-students-in-england>

**Tony Stephens**